



Institute of Social Sciences

The Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) in association with the Embassy of Costa Rica hosted the Vice-President of Costa Rica, Her Excellency Ms. Ana Helena Chacón Echeverría for a lecture on the 'Inclusion of Women in Costa Rican Society' on October 09, 2015.



H.E. Ms. Ana Helena Chacón Echeverría, Honourable Vice-President of Costa Rica, delivering the lecture.
From Left: Dr. George Mathew, Prof. S.P. Ganguly and Dr. Ash Narain Roy

In his inaugural address, Dr. Ash Narain Roy, Director, ISS, welcomed Her Excellency and spoke of her achievements in governance within the political framework of Costa Rica elucidating on her role both as a fearless crusader and a stormy petrel. Her work has been aimed at improving response mechanisms and raising awareness about domestic violence, sexual exploitation of minors, gender equity, juvenile justice and human trafficking along with being active in the field of sustainability, decentralization and social responsibility, Dr. Roy said. Highlighting the status of women world over, they are either deliberately silenced or preferably unheard, he said. Dr. Roy aptly quoted an old African proverb saying “Until the lions have their own historians, histories of the hunt will glorify the hunter”. Drawing a parallel and mirroring the power equation between men and women, he elaborated on this point stating that while the lion’s mane incites one’s admiration, it is actually the lionesses that bring in food and ensure survival of the species. Concluding his remarks, Dr. Roy spoke of the Government of India’s initiative to frame the country’s first comprehensive charter on women’s entitlement which he said would hopefully go a long way to push the polity for more inclusive governance.

Moderating the proceedings, Prof. S.P. Ganguly stated that there is clearly a distinct lack of mutual awareness when it comes to realities in both India and Costa Rica. With a spirit of elation, he stated



Prof. S.P. Ganguly

significant aspect prevalent in Costa Rica where even though there is a high degree of human development index, nearly 45% of houses under extreme poverty are headed by women. Explaining some of the causes for such detrimental state of women in the society, she said that teenage pregnancies with girls having children at an age as young as 15 is an alarming scenario to engage with as a policy maker; the drop-out rates from school are nearly 14,000 every year, she stated . Her Excellency spoke of certain sections of the demography as being really conservative with progressive reforms being stalled owing to orthodox perspectives on matters of divorce and abortion. Costa Rica has Roman Catholicism as the official state religion similar to that of the Vatican State, she said. Recalling her childhood days, Her Excellency mentioned how women are conventionally programmed as per social norms to be groomed in culinary skills while men are expected to be educated and engage in remunerative work. Education on sexual health and reproduction, opening of more schools and training centers for girls and women along with striving for an egalitarian society where women have equal opportunities just as men are critically imperative, she opined. Finally, she emphasized that knowledge can change the society where information has to be autonomous in form and spirit for genuine women's empowerment. Her Excellency ended her address thanking the participants and saying that a dialogue with different stakeholders is what she is keen to initiate and sustain.

that while ideas of cooperation are usually discussed between high-ranking Government officials, real cooperation happens in small enlightened corners such as the one they were all gathered to be for the visit of Her Excellency, Ms. Ana Echeverria at the Institute of Social Sciences. Herein, there is real synergy of cooperation between the polity of two spaces namely the civil societies where academicians, researchers, activists and students actively participate, he said. Prof. Ganguly spoke at length of the human development index in Costa Rica and its commitment to environmental sustainability programs.

In her address, Her Excellency Ms. Ana Helena Chacon Echeverria briefly spoke of the geographical background for Costa Rica being located between Nicaragua and Panama with a population of less than five million. She said that the challenges for women in Costa Rica are pretty much the same as for women in India and went on to say that her goal is to end extreme poverty among women. Ms.Echeverria threw light on a



H.E Ms. Ana Helena Chacon Echeverria

Dr. George Mathew, Chairman, Institute of Social Sciences, proposed a vote of thanks wherein he expressed his gratitude to Her Excellency for throwing light on ground realities of both, the society and social life in Costa Rica. He spoke of a global comparison in the 1980's wherein two countries, Costa Rica and Sri Lanka along with one state of India namely Kerala were declared by the United Nations as having low income but a very high quality of life thereby grabbing the world's attention. Dr. Mathew also mentioned his experience during a visit to Costa Rica in 2006 for a meeting at the United Nations University of Peace where he said there was relatively very little policing and literally no military presence, yet with a strong foundation of safety and security. He stated that if Costa Rica can achieve this, it must serve as an example for others to follow.

During the Q&A, the Ambassador of Peru mentioned that the President of the National Council of Science and Technology in his country was a woman and so are a significant majority of board members for the same. He went on to state that Costa Rica is an example for the whole world. The High Commissioner of Guyana congratulated Her Excellency on her ascent to the office of Vice-President and opined that the issue of economic independence of women is the crux of inclusion for women which makes them socially more stable. He drew the example of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh to substantiate his point.

The lecture was attended by several members of the diplomatic corps and activists from the civil society, faculty and students from Jawaharlal Nehru University along with a delegation from Amity University.



Section of the Audience



Institute of Social Sciences

8 Nelson Mandela Road, New Delhi - 110 070
Tel: 91-11-43158800, 43158801 Fax: 91-11-43158850
Email: issnd@issin.org; Website: www.issin.org